

Neighborhood of Battleford

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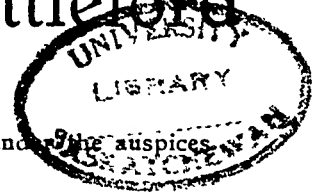


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"The Neighborhood of Battleford"

By An Old Time Resident.

Being a paper submitted by Mrs. J. A. Reid in the recent competition under the auspices of the Regina Women's Canadian Club.



HISTORICAL RECORDS OF RUPERT'S LAND DAYS.

Prior to the surrender to the Crown in 1870 of the sovereign rights previously enjoyed by the Hudson's Bay Company in Rupert's Land, history is almost silent respecting the Battleford district. That it had a name is recorded, as the post at Battle River is among the list of the Company's establishments which it reserved the right to retain, and in connection with which it was given a block of land, as part of the surrender terms.

Lieutenant (afterwards General Sir William) Butler, an Imperial army officer who was employed at Fort Garry in connection with the Red River disturbances of that time, and who later made a journey through the West to gather information for the Government respecting the Indians within the territory then newly admitted into the Dominion, tells in his book, "The Great Lone Land," of a detour he made from the direct route between Fort Carlton and the West in order to visit the Company's wintering post "opposite the mouth of Battle River," where he had been informed that Indians returning from their fall hunt on the plains would likely be found. So little communication was there with the district in 1870 that by the afternoon of the second day's journey west of Carlton the guide

of the party is said to have been "hopelessly lost," and it was only due to the instinct of their horses that the party eventually found their way to the camp of which they were in search. The band proved to be the Indians owning Mistawasis as their chief, now settled on the reserve allotted to them near Carlton.

HOW THE NAME OF BATTLEFORD WAS OBTAINED.

"Noo-tin-too-si-pi" — The Fighting Water — is the name given by the Indians to the river from which the neighborhood takes its name. Tradition offers more than one tale to account for the name, but the one suggesting the greatest plausibility is that which says the river was a kind of "no man's land" in those prehistoric days between the territories generally lived in and hunted over by the Indians of the south and those of the north. The mere crossing of the river was an offensive act, implying a possibility of tribal warfare, often — though not always — leading to one of those internecine contests which among other peoples and in other places would be known as a "battle." The Battle River can be crossed in many places, but the ford near its mouth, under the shadow of the Eagle Hills, appears to have been well known to all the tribes and the fur traders of the plains as a suitable place for trading the buffalo robes

gathered during the hunting seasons. Hence arose the name given to the place at which the capital of the North-West Territories was first located with some idea of permanence.

BATTLEFORD'S EARLY RAILWAY CONNECTION PROSPECTS.

Following the admission of Rupert's Land into the Dominion in 1870 the next step towards completing the confederation of the possessions of Great Britain in North America was the admission of British Columbia in 1871. One of the terms of union insisted upon by the Pacific coast colony was that the Dominion should construct a line of railway to connect the seaboard of British Columbia with the railway system of Canada. After considerable exploration work it appears to have been the general consensus of expert opinion that the best route for the railway to follow across the prairies lay as close as practicable to the northern limit of what the Hudson's Bay Company used to speak of as the "Fertile Belt," that is to say, through the Saskatchewan Valley, south of the river. A point near its entry into the Saskatchewan was selected as the most suitable crossing of Battle River, and thus the Battleford district came into the limelight.

THE "GLOBE'S" TRIBUTE TO BATTLEFORD.

Those who opposed the con-



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struction of the Pacific railway were numerous and they had powerful support in the eastern Press of that day. It was frequently asserted that the road could never earn enough in the prairie country to pay for the axle grease it would use. Every point of the proposed location was attacked, and none more so than Battleford. The Toronto "Globe" of the time perhaps took the lead in condemning the enterprise, both as a whole and in detail. The late Professor John Macoun, whose knowledge of the Canadian prairie country was admittedly unrivalled, who followed and closely inspected from the botanist's point of view the line of the proposed railway with Sandford Fleming and Principal Grant on their celebrated expedition — "Ocean to Ocean" — in 1872, and who for many years afterwards was employed in exploring the West for the Dominion Government, published in 1883 his book, "Manitoba and the Great North-West." In connection with the neighborhood of Battleford Professor Macoun drew evidence from the active detractors of the country in the words following:—

"As the views of the "Globe's" correspondent regarding Battleford are nearly in accord with my own, I give his description—

"This place is certainly one of the most beautiful and picturesque in the North-West, and if ever there was a spot which nature intended for the site of a city it is Battleford. The steamboat landing on the Saskatchewan is two or three miles west of where Battle River falls into the larger

stream, but for a long way (several miles at least above this) the general direction of the two streams is parallel, though the strip of land between them is seldom above two miles and a half, and in places less than three quarters of a mile in width. This strip of land between the two rivers consists of a beautiful plateau of fine, smooth upland prairie. Its highest portion is along the centre, midway between the two streams, and it slopes away gently towards each. The highest portion of this plateau (which the reader will have already identified as the site of the future city of Battleford) is considerably lower than the level of the prairie bluffs, which rise beyond the Saskatchewan on the north and Battle River on the south. With a city located on this peninsular plateau (which is now only occupied by the barracks of the Mounted Police), the south bank of the Battle River and the north bank of the Saskatchewan (about four miles apart) would afford the most charming situations for villa and suburban residences.

"Regarding the country in the immediate vicinity of Battleford, I am quite aware that what I have to say flatly contradicts what appears to me to be the general impression concerning it. Before coming here I was told that Battleford was in the midst of a sterile, dreary waste of sand, but I wish we had a few hundred square miles of just such dreary wastes of sand in Ontario and Quebec."

The "Globe" correspondent quoted as above by Professor

Macoun is not the only person who, Balaam-like, "came to curse but remained to bless."

SELECTION OF BATTLEFORD AS THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT.

Shortly after the Act respecting the North-West Territories was passed at Ottawa in 1875, the Hon. David Laird, Minister of the Interior in the Dominion Government, was appointed the first Lieutenant-Governor of the Territories, and Battleford was selected as the seat of his Government. For some five years previously the local affairs of the North-West had been supervised from Winnipeg by the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, assisted by a special council of men who, though residents of the Red River district for the greater part, were known to have interests in the western country beyond the bounds of the then recently created Province of Manitoba. Prominent among them was the gentleman then known as Mr. Donald A. Smith, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, who became better known in later years as Lord Strathcona. Mr. Smith's connection with the Company was, without doubt, the reason for his appointment to the first "North-West Council," and to his knowledge of the Territories, and his interest in the welfare of their people, can be traced much of the early legislation of the Parliament of Canada respecting that part of the Dominion of which the subject of this sketch was made the first central point, and from which at first such legislation was largely administered.





FIRST LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN AND FOR THE TERRITORIES.

On the establishment of the North-West Territories as an administrative unit of the Dominion for local purposes, with its own Lieutenant-Governor as above noted, Mr. A. E. Forget—then a young Quebec lawyer, who from that time onward for nearly half a century was actively and always prominently connected with the administration of the public affairs of Western Canada—was appointed to the dual position of Secretary to the Lieutenant-Governor and Clerk of the North-West Council. The first Council was composed of two gentlemen, Mr. Matthew Ryan and Lieut.-Colonel Hugh Richardson, who had been appointed stipendiary magistrates for the Territories, and who became members of the Council by virtue of their judicial positions. The then Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police, Lieut.-Colonel James Farquharson Macleod, was added to the Council by special appointment.

The provision in the Act that the Lieutenant-Governor should administer the affairs of the Territories "under instructions from time to time given him by the Governor-in-Council or by the Secretary of State of Canada," will strike a familiar note to those whose reading of Canadian history has acquainted them with the theories of colonial government in vogue from the cession of French Canada in 1763 to the final establishment of responsible government under Lord Elgin's administration. The North-West

Council for which provision was made in 1875, and for several years following, had both executive and legislative functions, and it was at first composed entirely of gentlemen who held public offices, that fact alone being the reason for their several appointments. The responsibility of the Lieutenant-Governor to the Government at Ottawa, as laid down by the provisions of the Act quoted above, completes the analogy—so far as it goes—between the form of local government first established in the North-West Territories and that which the famous Report of Lord Durham was destined to destroy in Upper and Lower Canada. But though the machinery of government provided for the North-West in 1875 was almost identical with that in force in the Eastern Provinces during the latter part of the eighteenth century and the earlier part of the nineteenth, its operation produced entirely different results, and for present purposes, beyond noting the fact, the matter will not be followed further.

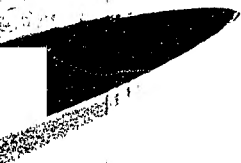
Though Battleford had been selected for the first seat of the government in the Territories, it was not possible for the Lieutenant-Governor with the other officials of the administration to proceed there directly upon their appointments, as there was then no provision for their accommodation. Those were truly the days of the "great lone land," and climatic conditions made necessary the construction of suitable buildings—the materials for which, and the men to use them,

having to be brought long distances—before the newly formed Government could undertake to perform its duties there. Temporary quarters were found at the Mounted Police barracks at Livingstone, in the Swan River district, while the buildings at Battleford required for the purposes of the new Government were being pushed to completion as rapidly as conditions permitted. The first session of the North-West Council (that of 1877) was not held at Battleford—for lack of accommodation—but at Livingstone. However, all the other sessions held during what may be described as the true pioneer epoch of the West, that is to say, prior to the advent of the railway in 1882, were held at the place first appointed for that purpose.

BEGINNINGS OF COMMUNITY LIFE AT BATTLEFORD.

Those who had the supervision of the work necessary before the Government could properly function at Battleford, with the workmen employed under their direction, formed the nucleus of the first community at the Capital, which established itself on what was then known as Telegraph Flat, along the south bank of Battle River, immediately below the edge of the upland prairie on which the Government House and other public buildings were in course of erection.

The Mounted Police quarters were located on the plateau between the two rivers, at a point from which an extensive view of the Saskatchewan River, both up and down, was to be had. With the exception of a house occupied



by the Rev. Thomas Clarke after his arrival at Battleford to take up work as an English Church missionary in 1877, the Police had sole possession of the land on the north side of Battle River for a number of years—as was noted by the correspondent of the "Globe" previously referred to—until the time arrived when the route of the Pacific railway was changed from the Saskatchewan Valley to its present location, and the seat of Government in the Territories moved south to a point on the new line.

While the Battle River is fordable without inconvenience during the greater part of the summer season, at times it is not. In the early days crossing was effected at such times by means of a foot bridge—later enlarged so as to afford accommodation for general traffic purposes—which was taken down before the end of each winter, being re-erected when the ice had passed away and the subsequent flood water had subsided. The original townsite of Battleford did not prove entirely satisfactory, as it was liable to inundation by such spring floods, generally due to the breaking up of the ice on Battle River before the ice moved out of the Saskatchewan. Such a flood occurred in April, 1882, when an ice jam at the mouth of the river caused the water to back up and rise some four feet above the river bank in a very few minutes. The consequent discomfort and damage done to property led to a movement to the present townsite on the higher land between the rivers. This move-

ment was started by Mr. A. Macdonald, of Winnipeg, a branch of whose general store business in that city had been established at Battleford, and which had suffered considerable loss by the flood. Mr. Macdonald caused a townsite to be surveyed having its lines based upon the general local direction of the Saskatchewan, but by the time the "new town" was beginning to assume a definite outline the Dominion Government ordered a new townsite—the first in the Territories—to be laid out on the ground occupied by the Macdonald townsite, but with its lines conforming to the Dominion Lands system of surveys. No greater muddle could well be imagined, but it was all straightened out in time.

BATTLEFORD'S FIRST CHURCH SERVICES.

Church services were established at an early period in the history of the little frontier settlement. Bishop McLean, the first Anglican Bishop of Saskatchewan, with the Rev. (afterwards Archdeacon) J. A. Mackay, on the last day of 1876 camped on the south side of Battle River while making a journey through the diocese. The next morning the reverend gentlemen celebrated New Year's Day by holding the first public religious service held in the community, the main part of the congregation being the men then engaged in the erection of the government buildings, the service itself being held in the telegraph office. The fiftieth anniversary of this service was held in St. George's Church on New Year's Day last (1927).

Among the members of Lieutenant-Governor Laird's party when he reached Battleford in 1877 was the Rev. Peter Straith, a young Presbyterian minister, who had come west primarily to act as tutor to the Governor's young children. Mr. Straith at once commenced to hold services according to the simple rites of his church. It is told that, such was the spirit of Christian unity which prevailed, it was no uncommon thing for Mr. McKay, the Anglican missionary, to assist the musical part of the Presbyterian services with the support of his deep bass voice, a courtesy that was as often reciprocated by Mr. Straith's tenor at the Anglican services.

The Rev. Fathers Lestanc and Andre, O.M.I., founded the Roman Catholic mission of St. Vital in the winter of 1877-78, the work of which was undertaken a few years later by the Rev. Father Bigonnesse, who continued his efforts for the welfare of his people throughout the lifetime of of a generation before his removal to another sphere of labor in the service of his church.

EARLY EDUCATION FACILITIES AND TEACHERS.

The subject of education early occupied the attention of the Government. Representations were made to the Dominion authorities by Lieutenant-Governor Laird deploring the possibilities that, under the existing conditions of the law and finances, children might grow up in ignorance. The latter difficulty was in part met by a grant of funds from Ottawa, but it was not until 1884



that a systematic organization of the Territories to provide for the general education of the young was entered upon. In the meantime individual local efforts, largely due to missionary initiative, supplemented by a limited amount of financial assistance from the Government, were applied to meet the difficulties of the situation. It is a matter of pleasant historical interest to note that one of Battleford's earliest teachers of the period under consideration has since those days travelled far along the path to literary fame, the publication last year of Mr. W. B. Cameron's book, "The War Trail of Big Bear," having been noted with commendation throughout the English speaking world.

HOW TOUCH WAS KEPT WITH THE OUTSIDE.

Communication with the outer world was not very frequent. Before surrendering its rights of government the Hudson's Bay Company had taken some steps towards providing telegraph facilities between Red River and Edmonton, which later passed through Battleford, but by 1870 little more had been done than to gather a certain amount of material, which as another of the surrender terms, was taken over by Canada when Rupert's Land was admitted into the Dominion. The construction work was of a primitive character in keeping with the times, and the service provided being little better, the line being as often out of order when required as ready for business.

The first North-West Council

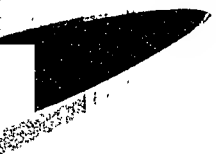
—that which met at Fort Garry in the early seventies—had moved in the matter of securing a monthly mail service to Edmonton from the Manitoba capital, which took about as long to make the journey. This service carried mail to Battleford in about three weeks after it left Red River, which period, when added to the time necessary to reach that place, meant that letters posted to Battleford from Eastern points in those early days were from five to nine weeks on their journey. Later, a Mounted Police mail by way of Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills, and thence across the line to Montana, improved the postal facilities to some extent, but not materially. As construction on the Canadian Pacific Railway proceeded across the prairies the mail service became more regular and the time of travel shortened, until, when the Riel outbreak of 1885 commenced, Battleford was enjoying a service every third week, starting from the railway at Qu'Appelle Station. After the summer of that year the mail left the railway line at Swift Current every week, reaching Battleford in six or seven days thereafter. Then when, five years later, mail was carried as far as Saskatoon by railway, with only two days' travel on the trail, postal conditions seemed almost metropolitan.

SOCIAL LIFE IN EARLY DAYS.

Though the little frontier community at Battleford was far removed from the haunts of civilization during those years of the seventies and eighties when it was seeking to establish itself,

yet there appears no indication that it was therefore "dead to the world" and its amenities. Athletic and sporting contests were frequently held during their season, while the long winter evenings were brightened by musical and dramatic entertainments—for which there was no lack of suitable talent available—all tending to maintain social intercourse upon a level that is often notably absent from the life of larger and more favorably situated communities. Contemporary accounts tell of the first ball ever held in the district. The hosts were the members of the Mounted Police, the time was the winter of 1878-9, and it is recorded that the affair was graced by the presence of all the available white ladies in the district. As these, however, numbered but three in all—the sister-in-law of the Lieutenant-Governor, the wife of the only married officer of the Mounted Police at the post, and the wife of a member of the Lieutenant-Governor's personal staff—it is evident that, in order to make the affair the general success it would appear to have been, their numbers must have been largely augmented by ladies belonging to the "first families" of the vicinity.

The district was a sportsman's paradise. Game of every description was abundant in its season and the buffalo still roamed the prairie within a short distance. It is recorded that on one occasion a band of buffalo wandered along the plateau between the rivers almost to the stockade around the Mounted Police post,



and it proved to be a "glorious hunting morning". Such an occurrence never happened again, but it is recorded that it was no uncommon thing for hunters to leave Battleford in the early morning and return before night with a supply of fresh buffalo meat, always welcome in a community in which—as was stated in the local newspaper of May 19, 1879, to be the case at that time—there was liable to be "no bacon, no beef, no pemmican, no fish, no game, and until Monday, the 12th, no flour in Battleford for love or money".

PHYSICAL WELFARE AND ITS MAINTENANCE IN THOSE TIMES.

In the early period of Battleford's history medical science was principally notable by the lack of its duly authorized practitioners. Sickness was largely treated by allopathic doses of pure ozone, with remarkably successful results. So-called patent medicines were carried in stock by the storekeepers, but those who used them recovered from their ailments in spite of them, for there was often more than a mere suspicion that such decoctions were intended not so much for the alleviation of the complaints described in the advertisements as to counteract the "droughty" conditions usually prevalent in a prohibition country.

At a later period—in 1885—a medical officer in charge of a military hospital at Battleford was often heard to say that if he had the same cases to deal with in his Eastern home as he had on the banks of the Saskatchewan, where instead of a tent for a ward

he would have at command all the resources of a fully equipped hospital, there was a considerable percentage of his patients whom he could not hope to assist to recovery, whereas at Battleford all recovered. He very frankly attributed his success to the purity and recuperative qualities of the prairie atmosphere.

A story of the treatment of one form of bodily trouble comes down from those days—the truth of which is vouched for—which may perhaps be told here. A young man from the East had made his way to a position in one of Battleford's primitive departmental stores, a departmental store which consisted of only one room and the many varieties of things which the store had for sale all passed over its one counter. One day shortly after his arrival he was asked by an Indian for a box of eye salve recommended to cure a form of eye disease to which the Indians were subject. As it happened that there was none in stock. The clerk, perhaps so as not to directly admit the fact, told his would-be customer that it was not nearly so effective as his own method of dealing with similar conditions. The Indian's interest being sufficiently aroused, the clerk proceeded to show the native how he simply took his eyes out, rubbed them with a clean cloth and put them in place again. It was perhaps as well that the Indian fled out of the store in terror of the evil spirit before the "medicine man" completed his exposition, as he had only one glass eye, and it might have given him some difficulty

to show how he treated the other.

Fortunately for the community there were one or two native women in Battleford who possessed remarkable knowledge of the simples to be found in various parts of the West. One such woman was the wife of an old time man of the plains who was perhaps more widely known as "Johnny Saskatchewan" than by his more orthodox name of Longmore. Mrs. Longmore knew all the places within three hundred miles where she could gather the leaves, the berries, the barks and the roots which formed her materia medica, and to her knowledge of their efficacy, and skill in their use, many a woman in those early days attributed her safe return from the Valley of the Shadow.

It is also told that Mrs. Longmore's husband had not as much faith in his wife's surgical abilities as others had in her medical attainments, for he one day appeared in the place where the local descendant of Tubalcain carried on his work, and seizing a small hammer together with a horseshoe nail demanded that an aching molar should be "knocked out" with those pseudo scientific instruments. To an expostulation on the ground that it might hurt too much, Johnny sternly replied, "Go on, boy; it won't hurt you!" That is hardly the modern attitude with which a "visit to the dentist" is regarded. A GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S VISIT.

The first historic social event on the grand scale in which Battleford had a part was the visit paid in 1881 to the little frontier



town by the Marquis of Lorne, then Governor-General of Canada. His Excellency's tour of the West was an interesting one, the like of which can never be undertaken again. Leaving Collingwood on July 21, nine days later he reached Winnipeg, having travelled to Red River from Prince Arthur's Landing—as Port Arthur was still called—on construction trains, over portages between the water stretches, which themselves were followed in canoes or bateaux. From Winnipeg the journey to the end of the track, then thirty miles west of Portage la Prairie, was made by construction train, after which an escort of the Mounted Police took charge of the party. The next six weeks were spent on the prairie between the steel head and Fort Macleod, following the trail by way of Rapid City, Shoal Lake, Fort Ellice, Fort Qu'Appelle, north to the South Branch of the Saskatchewan and across to Carlton. At Carlton the party transferred to a Hudson's Bay Company's steamboat, the Northcote, on which they first went east to Prince Albert and back, and then west to Battleford. After spending two days at the capital as the guest of Lieutenant-Governor Laird, by which time the Mounted Police escort was refitted for the still more interesting part of the journey, the Governor-General started across the open plains southwest to Calgary and then south to Macleod. Lord Lorne was evidently greatly impressed with what he saw of the neighborhood of Battleford, for he told the peo-

ple of Winnipeg at a dinner given in his honor on his return to that place that "for two days' march—that is to say for about sixty or seventy miles south of Battleford—we passed over land whose excellence could not be surpassed for agricultural purposes." In 1881 that was heretical doctrine to preach in the Red River Valley.

HOW BATTLEFORD WAS MADE KNOWN TO THE WORLD.

During the summer of 1878 a new era in the history of the North-West Territories was inaugurated at Battleford by the publication of the first newspaper between the Red River and the Rocky Mountains. This journalistic venture was appropriately called "The Saskatchewan Herald", and its aims were prophetically set forth in the "Herald's Song", which appeared in its first number on August 26 of that year, in the following lines—

I was born without pomp or glory,
Unfettered and uncared for,
Amid hills eternal and hoary,
In the land of the Golden West.

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And perchance in the not long future,
Ere the star of my life goes down,
I shall know that this land shines brightest
In the gems of the British Crown.

The publisher and editor, Mr. P. G. Laurie, spent the best part of his life in pioneer work. Coming to Canada from Scotland at an early age, he in due course learned the business which formed his life's work in Ontario, amid the echoes of the turbulent political times through which Upper Canada had then recently passed. He later undertook to

publish the first newspaper in Owen Sound, in the days when that place could only be reached by water during the summer months, or on horseback or foot through the bush at other seasons of the year. Mr. Laurie was first seized with the impulse to follow Horace Greeley's advice to "Go West" before the days of the Civil War in the United States, but for him there were no attractions south of the boundary line. Leaving Owen Sound in 1859 he prepared his plans to proceed to Red River, to publish the first newspaper there, but illness in his family so delayed his movements that when he was ready to start he found that in the meantime he had been forestalled. But, so as to get as far west as was then possible, and still remain under the British flag, he commenced publication, at Windsor, of the Essex Record, carrying it on successfully for a number of years. A recurrence of the Western fever led him to Fort Garry in 1869, not long before the outbreak of the Red River troubles, during which he took such a prominent part that a reward of several hundred pounds—the Hudson's Bay Company's currency of the period—was offered for his apprehension by Louis Riel, the leader of the insurrection. Safely escaping out of the country for a time, he again returned West in the wake of the troops under Colonel Wolseley and once more established himself as a Western pioneer newspaper man at Winnipeg in the fall of 1870. During the next few years he took



an active part in a number of the journalistic enterprises of Winnipeg's early days, but left them all behind when he moved further west to Battleford in 1878, transporting his precious plant and other materials over the intervening six hundred miles of prairie by means of an ox train. For twenty-five years thereafter, until "the star of his life went down", the late P. G. Laurie and his newspaper kept Battleford and the Territories in the public eye, not only in Canada but in many other parts of the world. Always cheerfully optimistic thro' manifold disappointments, with an utter absence of every form of self-seeking, his example encouraged others to hold on through the many difficulties of pioneer life in those early days, until now, we know—though he did not live to see it—that this land of Saskatchewan is without doubt to be counted among the "brightest in the gems of the British Crown". For P. G. Laurie, as for all others of his time and kind, the people of this prairie land may well utter the age-old prayer, "Requiescat in pace".

THE INDIAN RISING IN 1885.

No account of the early days of any portion of the former North-West Territories would be complete without some reference to the troubled days of 1885, and the neighborhood of Battleford had its own particular share of the anxieties of the time which differed in many respects from those met with elsewhere in the West. To deal adequately with that story would more than occupy whatever space limits may be

allotted to this account of Battleford's general history of which the Indian rising can only be one of a number of interesting details. Salient points of the story therefore can only be touched upon, and that briefly.

Indian difficulties in the neighborhood of Battleford had never proved really serious, though more than exciting at times. Before the Indians began to settle down to a regular life on their reserves their fits of restlessness throughout the West mainly centred upon Battleford, as Lieutenant-Governor Laird was also Indian Commissioner, and it was to him that their complaints and threatenings were generally directed. In 1879 the Blackfoot nation crossed the plains to Battleford to take the treaty money due them, but on their arrival at the time and place fixed for the payments the money had not arrived, and was known to be a week's travel away. The local food supplies of the Indian Department were not sufficient to keep the Indians until the money should arrive, and they were, perhaps not unnaturally, dissatisfied. At that period the Indians were always ready to protest against the changes in their mode of life forced upon them by the advent of the white man into their country, and to complain generally of the disappearance of the buffalo, their principal means of subsistence during their nomadic days. They, therefore, went into Council to discuss the situation and continued for three days solemnly debating the question as to whether or not the time

was opportune for killing all the white people, who—from the point of view of many of their number—were the cause of all their misfortunes. But the difficulty was overcome, and its cause never recurred again.

Five years later—in the summer of 1884—a disturbance took place on Poundmaker's reserve, the younger Indians attempting to prevent the arrest of one of their number. This was also quieted without an outbreak at the time. But the young Indians remained excited and unsettled, which factor entered largely into the plans of Louis Riel for his proposed campaign of the following year.

The agitation fomented by Riel all through the winter of 1884-5 among the people of the settlements around Batoche's Crossing on the South Branch of the Saskatchewan River was carried to all similar communities throughout the North Saskatchewan Valley, Battleford among the rest. During the previous autumn the Mounted Police post had been quietly but steadily strengthened by drafts of men from all parts of the West. In October, just before the winter set in, even the last joined recruits at Regina were sent north to Battleford, so as to ensure that all the strength the Force could command would be within striking distance should the agitation get out of bounds. At the same time the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Fort Carlton was in great part taken over for police purposes, and as fast as quarters there could be arranged they

were filled by detachments from Battleford.

As the year 1885 opened up it became known that emissaries from Riel were visiting the reserves around Battleford, carrying diplomatic presents of tea and tobacco, and endeavoring to incite the Indians to prepare to go on the warpath "when the grass became green" in the spring. This was not paid much attention to, the authorities apparently being of the opinion that if the centre of the disaffection could be combatted there would be little or no fear of an Indian rising, and acted accordingly.

On March 15 an almost total eclipse of the sun was visible at Battleford, and it immediately began to be known that the Indians had been told to look for that manifestation of the Manitou's approval of Riel's plans to free the country from the white men and give it back to the Indians and their friends. To them, the foretelling of that apparently marvellous phenomenon was direct evidence of the supernatural powers which they had been told were possessed by Riel, and the indifference which they had up to that time maintained began to tremble in the balance. Still there was no undue precipitation in their movements. The clash at Duck Lake was probably premature, as it found the Indians in the Battleford district unprepared to enter into the conflict. For one thing, the grass was not yet "green", the ice was still in the rivers although the snow had largely disappeared, and a winter cam-

paign on the plains was not an enterprise to be lightly undertaken, even by Indians.

Perhaps the first real indication of possible trouble at Battleford was an intimation sent to Indian Agent Rae that the Indians proposed to visit him to learn his version of the trouble between their friends and the Police of which they had heard. The evidence of unrest among the Indians caused the Police to warn the settlers throughout the district, and advise them to go to the barracks where they would be better able to protect themselves should that action become necessary—the Police being too few in numbers to do so—than if they remained on their farms. With but two exceptions they all did so in safety. One of the two was James Payne, instructor on the Stoney Reserve, south of the town, who at all times expressed his entire belief in the good intentions of his Indians; and would not believe it possible that they would ever listen to the blandishments of Riel's friends. He paid for his faith with his life. The other, a near-by rancher named Tremont, was killed while making preparations to go to town. In another direction, a number of Indians forcibly robbed settlers on their way to Battleford, taking all that they had with them but sparing their lives. All the ranches west of town were looted and destroyed, the cattle and horses being driven off, by Indians from the reserves on Battle River BEFORE they had started on their presumably peaceful mission of enquiry. Later, while

on his way to the conference asked for, Indian Agent Rae was shot at from ambush but not hit. Under the circumstances of the time he could well plead justification for not proceeding further in the matter.

When they finally reached the southern outskirts of the town the Indians gave themselves up to the destruction of all property at Battleford that was not under the protection of Police rifles. The bridge over Battle River had been taken down as usual and the ice was unsafe to cross, so they practically had things their own way on the south side. Their procedure was to set fire to a building after nightfall and by the flare of its light carry away or destroy everything that could be seen. As they kept themselves hidden during the daytime, they could not well be got at by the handful of men available for any such purpose.

The more hazardous guards and patrols were undertaken by the dozen or so members of the Mounted Police who had not been drafted to Carlton, who were voluntarily joined in that work by two citizens—H. H. Nash and Frank Smart. Harry Nash was ranching in the Eagle Hills at the time, but, until a year or two previously had himself been a prominent member of the Police. Frank Smart was a trader and storekeeper in town, who believed himself to be as greatly trusted and liked as he was known by the Indians. His faith was as misplaced as was James Payne's, for he was killed from ambush, in daylight, al-

most within sight of town, a day or two before Battleford was relieved. The younger men of the district were organized as the "Battleford Rifles", and rapidly taught simple movements and how to handle Snider rifles, so that they might be able to meet any possible call upon their efforts. The older men were also armed and performed such duties as fell within their limitations, under the name and organization of a "Home Guard".

Women bore themselves as bravely as their menfolk. Cheerfully following their home-making instincts they quickly settled down to the work of feeding and otherwise looking after the "creature comforts" of the people around them. As was the case on many of the nights of that month of April, 1885, before the relief column under Colonel Otter arrived, a burning building gave evidence of the presence of Indians in the vicinity, and the "Assembly" call with its wierd, impressive notes quickly brought every man under arms to his allotted post. It was never very long afterwards before relays of women were carrying to the men on guard cans and jugs of hot coffee, a very welcome thing in those cold hours between midnight and dawn of that especially icy inclement month.

Of the six hundred human beings inside the Police stockade at Battleford, there were a number who were believed to have been in sympathy with Riel's agitation. The prospects of facing an Indian uprising was a vastly different matter, and none

were more keenly apprehensive of what might happen did the Indians once get control of the situation than were these people. Had the Indians at Battleford possessed a real leader, with even elementary military instincts, the tale of its siege might easily have been a serious one. There was no water to be had nearer than the rivers, and food was none too plentiful. A few determined men strategically placed could have made it difficult—perhaps impossible—to obtain water, certainly not without loss of life, but, fortunately, no action to that end was ever taken.

April 23 brought the siege of Battleford to a close. On the evening of that day a number of horsemen were seen travelling rapidly along the high south bank of Battle River, and considerable rifle firing was heard. Later it was found that the men were Colonel Otter's advanced scouts who had collided with a party of Indians proceeding in the direction of the town. The Indians fled, the scouts after them. Of how many there were, or how many got away, there is no record.

For other incidents of the rising the records of its suppression must be searched. Much remains untold here of the happenings in the neighborhood of Battleford, so much more must be left out of this account of happenings elsewhere.

LATER DAYS AND DOINGS.

All that space will permit of has now been said respecting the main events and conditions of early life in the neighborhood

of Battleford. What may remain to be said of later and present day conditions can be briefly told.

Battleford did not benefit by the introduction of railway transportation into the West as did other places. Rather the contrary, because it can be truly stated that manipulation of railway routes and charters has been the prime reason why Battleford has not, as yet, fulfilled its early promise. The removal of the main line of the first trans-continental railway dealt the pioneer district a blow from which it was long in recovering. During the years following the promises held out by a succession of speculative railway charters tended to keep hope alive until the first railway line made its appearance in the Saskatchewan Valley, when, as far as the town of Battleford was concerned, its welfare was once more disregarded as the road passed by on the other side of the river. The immediate result was the establishment of another town within sight of the old town, each detracting from the development of the other, which condition, in all probability, will continue for a long time to come.

Battleford stands high in all matters affecting education, and its advanced facilities attract students from a wide area. It is the seat of the administration of judicial matters for the district, as well as the place of record for land titles. It boasts the first and most active historical society in the Province, and by its public memorials keeps green the

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memories of those who in former times lived and sometimes died for its well being. During the Great War the women of the old town sent their husbands and sons, brothers and sweethearts,

to take their part in the cause of freedom as women did in every other part of the British Empire, and with similar results.

Time alone can tell what the future of Battleford and its neigh-

borhood will be, but its rare beauty of situation and its past history will ever make it a place of interest to all who love Canada's prairie country and have its welfare at heart.



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